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The Application of Mass Education
Teaching Methods in Army Forces and
A Few Important Considerations re-
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Jen-min Chiao-yu (People's Education),
By Hu T'u-hsiang and Huang T'ang-pei,
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The application of mass education teaching methods in the army corps and a few important considerations related thereto.

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By: Hu T'u-hsiang and Huang T'ang-fei

SUMMARY

(Editors note: This article is a merger of two separate articles entitled " The two basic problems in teaching the national language in the army " and " Some teaching problems in the army " by Hu T'u-hsiang and Huang T'ang-fei respectively.)

This article deals with the results and experiences gained from the 3-year cultural education program, particularly ^{the} national language phase, conducted by the educational cadres in 3 army companies in the ^{I-} Yang district in Hunan. The program aims at raising the culture of the troops to the level of elementary and middle school graduates. The results of this program, according to the authors, will have far reaching repercussions in the reconstruction of national defense, in the revolutionary struggle of the workers and peasants, and in the task of removing illiteracy and of raising the cultural level of the masses.

Following the directive issued by the national language research group of the Hunan military district concerning the 3-year cultural education program the army adopted the program as a pilot project. The program was launched with 851 students enrolled. More than 96 percent of these students completed the study of the historical development of ^{acquired} society and they ~~expressed~~ ^{acquired} a " mass " viewpoint, a " workers " outlook and the concept of service to the soldiers which gave them a strong ideological foundation. The results in teaching the national language were gratifying.

Preliminary to the actual organization of the program, the soldiers were instructed on the importance of cultural education ^a task for the party and army in the reconstruction of culture and the nation's defense. With this understanding all the mistaken notions about mass education had to be corrected and the true meaning of this term had to be fully understood.

One of the guiding principles in the employment of the mass education method to achieve the 3-year cultural education program is that the achievement of the program depends upon the soldiers and their creative sense and desire for knowledge.

The procedure of organizing and promoting cultural education must be decided by the educational cadres before any steps in organization is taken. The study plan for the soldiers should be presented to the company commander, then transmitted to squad commanders. The teacher should be introduced to the cadre leader of the squad, and then the company commander should mobilize all levels of his organization on the importance of learning.

A system of collective reports on the daily educational activities, including difficulties confronting the program and students, should be established. Study groups and sub-groups should report their findings to the teachers. Discussion groups might be formed to discuss methods of teaching and their effectiveness and problems of learning.

Company commanders should be informed about special features of their company, such as its history, organization and the special educational problems and tasks they face. Educational cadres and teachers should be informed about past educational methods and their results, the views of students regarding the method of learning, their needs and difficulties, the individual mental receptiveness of students, ~~the~~ ^{and the} required for learning etc.

There should be tests to determine the progress of the students. Finally there must be an investigation of the student's age, years of military service, party membership, size of his family. These

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facts are helpful in reforming and advancing education.

Educational cadres should bear in mind the special considerations that are involved in applying the mass education method to promote culture education among the soldiers. Most soldiers are adults and though they may have little formal education, they have strong reasoning powers, even though their memory may not compare so favorably with those of regular students. From the experience in the revolutionary struggle they learned to express themselves very concisely and clearly and through hardship and training they acquired practical knowledge in arithmetic, hygiene and other common knowledge. They have a high political sense. The problem in teaching soldiers is how to combine the content of study with their practical experience and knowledge. Teachers should try to start with the practical knowledge that the soldiers possess and supplement this with cultural knowledge. All the scattered experience and practical knowledge of the soldiers should be synthesized into a more scientific and cultural knowledge.

In order to apply the mass education method, teachers and intellectuals engaged in this work should drop all their superior pretenses and live and work among the soldiers in order to know the latter's educational and cultural level. Through individual conferences with soldiers, teachers can know their educational needs, problems, and difficulties.

Knowing the particular problems and conditions of the soldiers, materials for the teaching of the national language were selected to meet the needs and circumstances of the soldiers. Essays from "Soldiers Life" were selected because they deal with subjects of immediate interest to the troops. Teachers must carefully prepare each lesson with special attention given to the amount of time to be devoted to teaching new characters, explanation of new characters, explanation of the lesson, and for practice and study by the student in and out of the classroom.

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Education in the national language is the road to education for the masses and it is essential for the achievement of educational objectives. These are some of the special points in national language education that must be understood if educational objectives are to be attained.

(1) Education should be democratic. Teachers should be active organizers and leaders in the classroom, but they should stimulate and arouse the students to express their own views and apply their own practical knowledge toward the solution of problems presented by the teachers. This is the basic method of learning. This does not mean the teacher serves as chairman of the class. The teacher guides the discussion, offers suggestions, corrects the students, and through his instruction and guidance the students arrive at the correct solution of a problem. In the teaching of language, for example, a teacher reads a sentence (about the Korean war). The sentence is incorrectly worded. Students are asked to correct it. The teacher explains the meaning of the various characters in the sentence, the students offer suggestions, finally with the assistance of the teacher the students correct the sentence.

(2) It is important to select materials that are of practical value to the students and materials that are familiar to them. In the learning of characters, students should be given those characters that represent common objects that are familiar to him. The language and vocabulary of the workers and peasants are dynamic and descriptive. In many instances teachers cannot explain the meaning of a character in their own language, whereas the students using his own vocabulary offers a better explanation of the character. Therefore the words used by the soldiers should be used in the national language educational materials.

(3) The objective of national language study is to enhance

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the soldier's military and political services. For this reason each essay or lesson should have a political meaning and viewpoint.

(4) The needs of the army must be met if learning is to improve. The views of the soldiers must be considered and studied in order to overcome the shortcomings of the educational system. It is most important that teachers humbly accept the views of the students, that teachers possess the spirit of "self-criticism," and concentrate on correcting their own weaknesses.

This method of teaching and learning the national language is equally applicable to other subjects such as arithmetic. After this research on learning the national language, the mass education method was regarded as the key to the successful attainment of cultural education in the army.

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